

Clinical challenge

Last month's answers

Differential Diagnosis

Pulmonary thromboembolism, acute anaphylaxis, AMI, eclampsia.

Diagnosis

Amniotic Fluid Embolism

Amniotic fluid embolism is the entry of amniotic fluid into the maternal venous circulation.

This is a rare but potential catastrophic condition occurring in approximately 1:8000 pregnancies (May and Mahlmeister 2004).

The body responds in two phases, the initial phase is one

of pulmonary vasospasm causing hypoxia, hypotension, pulmonary oedema and cardiovascular collapse.

The second phase sees the development of left ventricular failure, with haemorrhage and coagulation disorder with a further uncontrollable haemorrhage.

Amniotic fluid embolism can occur at any gestation, although it is mostly associated with labour and excessive uterine contractions.

Transfer of the amniotic fluid from the uterus to the maternal circulation can be insidious, and associated with a tear in the lower uterine segment.

Disseminated intravascular coagulation is likely to occur within 30 minutes of the initial collapse. This is due to blood coagulation failure manifesting from a release of thromboplastin.

Management of this patient at the DIC stage involves transport criticality for therapy to:

- Interrupt the coagulation cascade;
- deactivate the fibrinolytic system;
- replace coagulation factors; and
- replace blood.



Two minutes with...

Theresa McRoberts

Job title:	Third-Year Student Paramedic
Location:	North Mackay Ambulance Station (previously at Clermont)
Years of service:	5
Best part of your job:	Just turning up to work, not knowing what you might be going to and working with the other emergency services – QFRS and QPS
Last book you read:	<i>The Pyjama Boy</i> by Steve Murphy, but I'm always reading my CPM
Dream holiday:	Any holiday with that someone special
Favourite movie:	<i>Men of Honour</i>
Favourite music:	I love all types of music, hence my nickname 'the walking jukebox'
Favourite sports team:	Brisbane Broncos